



# USRA

## PRESS RELEASE

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*More information and images are available at <http://www.sofia.usra.edu/>*

### **EVERGREEN INTERNATIONAL AIRLINES AWARDED CONTRACT TO OPERATE AND MAINTAIN THE SOFIA AIRCRAFT**

Columbia, Maryland—The Universities Space Research Association (USRA) announced today that it has selected Evergreen International Airlines to operate and maintain NASA's Stratospheric Observatory for Infrared Astronomy (SOFIA) aircraft.

Evergreen International Airlines will provide operational support, flight crews, and training and dispatch, while Evergreen Air Center will provide heavy maintenance and support.

NASA and DLR, the German Aerospace Center, are working together to create SOFIA — a Boeing 747SP aircraft modified by L-3 Communications Integrated Systems to accommodate a 2.5 meter reflecting telescope provided by DLR. SOFIA will be the largest airborne observatory in the world, and will make observations that are impossible for even the largest and highest of ground-based telescopes. The observatory is being developed and will be operated for NASA by a team of industry experts led by prime contractor USRA. SOFIA will be based at NASA's Ames Research Center at Moffett Federal Airfield near Mountain View, California, and is expected to begin scientific operations in 2005.

Evergreen International Aviation, headquartered in McMinnville, Oregon, is a portfolio of five diverse aviation companies that include an international cargo airline operating 10 Boeing 747s, aircraft maintenance and service companies, a full service aircraft ground handling company, and a helicopter service company. For the past 12 years, NASA has relied on Evergreen Air Center for complete maintenance, repair, modifications, and corrosion control programs on two Boeing 747 Space Shuttle carriers.

"We're delighted to have Evergreen on board," said USRA President David C. Black. "They are an experienced world-wide operator of 747s, they have considerable experience with NASA, and they are clearly very enthusiastic about being involved with this world-class astronomy research facility."

The Universities Space Research Association is a private nonprofit corporation founded in 1969. Comprised of 95 college and university institutional members, USRA provides a mechanism through which universities can cooperate effectively with one another, with the government, and with other organizations to further space science and technology, and to promote education in these areas. Its mission is carried out through its institutes, centers, divisions, and many diverse programs. Most of USRA's activities are funded by grants and contracts from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.